

COMMENTS for the Hearing on the EIS, Yucca Mountain Repository
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1 [I base my testimony largely on the WHITE PINE COUNTY COMMENTS TO THE SCOPE OF THE REPOSITORY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT OF 11/22/95, or the White Pine County scoping study, which has been totally ignored by the Department of Energy in preparing the draft EIS.

What are we in White Pine County? Fools? Guinea Pigs? Didn't we outgrow both foolishness and experimental animal status when we became unwitting down winders during the testing process at NTS? Now, in its cavalier wisdom, the DOE has yet again "put us in our places" by refusing to incorporate comment on local environmental impacts and mitigation.]

I won't bore the committee with recollections of being irradiated as a child, and of having lost an uncle to radiation poisoning. These stories haven't moved the DOE. However, I am of a literary mind-set, so I offer you the following scenario:

2... [The Day Everything Went Wrong.

It is a February day on Highway 93. Temperatures are hovering at roughly -50 degrees, considering the wind chill factor. A blizzard howls as the legal limit truck, carrying plutonium, negotiates the road. Visibility is severely limited. The driver is tired and knows he can't stop in Ely, for the government, as a sop to the people, has made it illegal for such shipments to halt within the populous areas of White Pine County. The truck has almost skidded off the ice-encrusted road on several occasions. The driver is tense.

Suddenly, a herd of mustangs appears out of the white-out; one, a white stallion, bewildered, races directly toward the truck. The driver can't swerve, he can't gear down---there's no time. The truck plows into the pale horse; the horse is thrown onto the truck's hood. Screaming. Its hooves and carcass smash through the windshield. The driver loses control; the truck hits a skid. The hardened trailer topples onto its side, propelling it and the cab off the road.

His seatbelt has held the driver securely. He is shaken, glass covered, with several shallow cuts, but otherwise unhurt. After a moment, in which he composes himself, he swears at the horse bleeding furiously into the cab. He gets cautiously out, being careful not to tip the cab over. It feels like it might go; it's already up on two wheels with the weight of its load and the trailer's wierd angle. /

2 cont.

The driver checks himself for injuries, then walks around the wreck. "Thank God," he thinks. "The load seems fine." He gets on his cell phone and calls 911, reporting the accident to Ely's highway patrol. Then he digs flares out of the cab and proceeds to mark off the crash site.

It is eighty miles to Ely; the highway patrol instantly contacts the Yucca Mountain site, informing them of an accident and possible breach of environmental security. It is a six hour drive---a two hour flight from Yucca Mountain to the crash site. The snow continues as the patrolman rushes as fast as the deadly-slick road permits to pick up the driver.

What no one knows is if the plutonium is secure. In fact, a crack in the container is already emitting radioactivity into the air. Particles are carried by the snow to the ground, where they freeze into the already thick layer of ice; particles remain airborne.

Shortly a car carrying a family comes along. Despite the trucker's warning to stop and not near the crash, they are impatient, afraid that they will be in too much danger, so they plow through, taking particles with them. Of course, the trucker is generally armed, but by the time he slip-slides from where he has been setting flares, the car has driven out of range, and he can't see it well anyway.

With plutonium continuing to leak, an ecological disaster is in the making.

I could go on with this insane scenario; however, you people on this panel know more than I about why you have chosen to do absolutely nothing about putting White Pine County's concerns into the EIS.

3...

I submit that you have failed to do this because you don't have any fundamental understanding of the climate, hazards (both in terms of terribly-fickle and unpredictable weather for seven months of each year, and equally unpredictable wildlife), and that you have willful pride and drive that enable you blindly to put the square peg of nuclear waste, both high and low level, into the round hole of Yucca Mountain, in spite of much evidence that it is a very poor storage site, due to potential volcanism and leakage into the ground water from the fault zones, to say nothing of leakage due to the inability of mankind to make a container that is guaranteed to last 10,000 plus years.

Why haven't you addressed problems of climate, lack of training of personnel to handle such emergencies locally, lack of proper highways to carry such hazardous waste, lack of attention to what will happen to the local economy in terms of stigma after a nuclear spill? (I'll bet tourists don't flock to Chernobyl.) What will happen to the environment at the Great Basin National Park if there is a nearby plutonium leak? How many people in what

3 cont. radius from the accident will die because of air and water-borne contamination in the event of such a leak?

You don't address these, because it is easier to sell the project from a stance of wishful thinking and denial. I hope that's your reason. I'd hate to think that once again, officials of the atomic bureaucracies see people on the transport routes, passing through Nevada, and natives as being expendable---expendable for at least twenty-seven years, while you haul waste over America.

4 Yes, I'm angry. I'm also prayerful that, because there is such a demand to treat and dispose of both high and low level nuclear wastes that there are people working on a technology or technologies that would enable this material to be treated or effectively disposed of on site. Why can't we wait for such technology, rather than setting the citizens of the United States up for potentially nightmarish exposure, on possibly multiple occasions to the worst materials the nuclear age has generated? Why can't you find it in your policies to err on the side of caution, as would any good scientist when exploring such a potentially dangerous plan with so many variables and so many unknowns? |

5 I submit you've developed only this site, because you believe
6 NEVADA IS A WASTELAND and also weak politically. You're banking on having no interstate reactions from the states through which this material will be hauled, because you will "keep the problem quiet." Just what is your logic in tempting fate by hauling this material through many of the fifty states? Where is the political/moral payoff for taking this kind of chance? Is there enough monetary gain possible to stake so much on this? If you ever knew it, you have forgotten what the gods did to mortals who displayed hubris or overweening pride. Furthermore, you have nothing to lose, for you'll be long dead when the final record of the "noble experiment" of Yucca Mountain is written. How does the U.S., be it the NRA, EPA, or AEC build
8 10,000 years of accountability into this project? Surely you recognize, given the mega changes in society now, that guaranteeing responsibility over such a period is not possible. Ten thousand years ago, after all, mankind had just begun the age of agriculture.

7 Isn't it better to have people through many generations storing waste in their back yards where proximity to it will inspire wise stewardship than to put it away, where "out of sight, out of mind" will be a terrible temptation?

Thank you for your time even though your draft EIS certainly shows little or no fundamental concern.